

Improving water quality



Iowans depend on clean water for livestock production, recreation, fish and other aquatic life habitat, and for a healthy drinking water supply. The programs aimed at reducing soil erosion also improve water quality by reducing sedimentation into streams and lakes.

Other water quality programs targeting a reduction of nutrients and chemicals are featured here.

Nutrient and pest management:

Nutrient management is primarily aimed at livestock and crop production in concert with each other.

Properly containing manure is a big part of nutrient management, but applying the nutrients to fields is another part of the picture that has a big impact on water quality.

No matter the size of a livestock operation, operators should have a nutrient management plan that includes: nutrients available in manure; needs of the land based on a soil test and crops planted; and time and method of nutrient application.

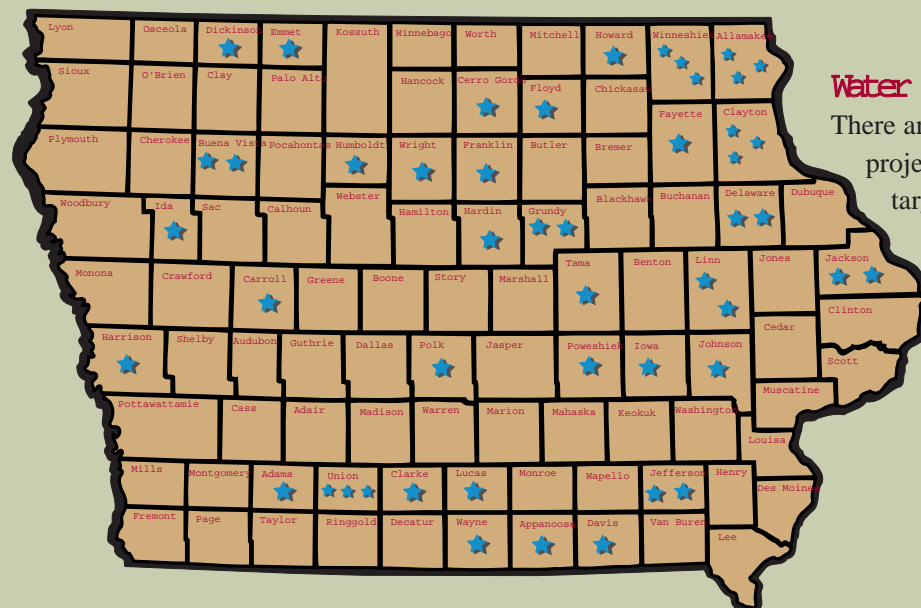
ICM — Integrated crop management is a term used to describe managing crops using methods that determine inputs needed based on current status of the land, crops, and the environment. ICM uses scouting which is determining the needs of the land or plants before treating them with either nutrients or pesticides.

Some businesses and private consultants provide ICM services. In areas where a special water quality project was funded with ICM as an integral part, NRCS staff may have expertise.

ISU Extension may also provide this service. It is common to save money even if you pay for the service because you often use less herbicide and pesticide. The environment benefits too.

Pesticide management means only applying pesticides when needed and in places where needed. This requires a combination of scouting and spot spraying.

Pesticide management also entails the safe use of mixing and cleaning spray equipment.



Water quality projects

There are more than 45 active water quality projects in Iowa. These projects are usually targeted at specific resource concerns and are administered by a partnership between federal, state and local agencies. Stars on this map indicate active water quality projects as of April 1998.

Programs

Technical help: The NRCS, DSC and Conservation Districts help with the design of small manure management facilities. For larger facilities, these organizations will consult on what is needed.

The IDNR will outline regulations for large operations. They also issue needed permits.

EQIP — Environmental Quality Incentives Program: This federal program is aimed at treating all resources — soil, water, air, plants and animals. With an EQIP contract, landowners look at a systems approach, rather than treating for just one resource. EQIP contracts usually have several components.

Local work groups submit projects to be selected for priority areas. Priority areas are ranked by the State Technical Committee. Selected priority areas receive money to carry out their proposals. Sign-up dates, cost share rates, eligible practices, and ranking criteria are decided locally.

In addition to local priority area projects, some funds are used to address statewide concerns. Anyone not in a priority area is eligible for funding if they address a statewide concern.

REAP — Resource Enhancement and Protection Program: Annual REAP funding, allocated for conservation education, water quality projects and cost-share for soil conservation, is available through local Conservation Districts.

Iowa Publicly Owned Lakes: The program provides cost-share on permanent soil and water conservation practices to control sediment above publicly owned lakes. Contact your local Conservation District for more information.

EPA Section 319 program: The IDNR provides funding for approved water quality projects through the EPA — Environmental Protection Agency — Section 319 program. This provides funding for demonstrations and implementation of water quality practices to protect priority water bodies from farm runoff. Local projects are developed by, and implemented through Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Cost share and incentive payments are available for practices to help solve locally identified problems such as runoff that may include sediment, livestock manure, fertilizer and pesticides.

Iowa Water Protection Fund: This REAP funded program helps install water quality improvement practices in watersheds above priority lakes and streams. Cost share and other financial incentives are provided for practices to control sediment runoff and better manage nutrients, pests, and manure.

Whether a project is federal or state administered, the NRCS, DSC or Conservation District will know about the programs and which water quality practices are eligible for cost share or technical assistance.

Conservation Buffer Initiative:

Under the conservation buffer initiative, landowners are encouraged to install buffers or non-cropped areas that improve water quality and also improve wildlife habitat.

More than 20 organizations are part of the buffer initiative in Iowa. Initiative organizations with programs are listed below.

Continuous CRP — Conservation Reserve Program offers one way to establish a buffer and get paid for the land used. Buffers include, but are not limited to, contour buffer strips, filter strips, riparian buffers, grassed waterways, and field windbreaks. Eligible landowners offer land for the program and are paid the average rental rate based on soil type and corn suitability rating (CSR). Contracts are for a 10- or 15-year period. A bonus is paid for some practices. Check locally for specific rules and for land eligibility. NRCS provides technical help in designing a buffer system. FSA administers the program and will handle contracting for rental payment and reimbursement for cost share on practice establishment. To learn more about the program, visit the local USDA Service Center.

Pheasants Forever: Funding or material assistance to improve CRP seedings, establish CRP filterstrips, riparian buffers, etc. may be available from your local Pheasants Forever chapter.

Trees Forever Iowa Buffer Initiative:

The goal of the Initiative is to increase awareness of the many long term benefits of planting trees, shrubs and grasses as buffers. Trees Forever is establishing demonstration sites and a network of technical and financial help for landowners.

Program guide for Water Quality

	NRCS	FSA	CD	PF	TF	EXT	IDNR
Technical help	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Financial help	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		